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ABSTRACT

Intended for teachers of elementary and secondary school writing, this paper describes the Regular Writing Practice (RWP) program, which combines the philosophical and pedagogical bases of Lyman Hunt's Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading program with the instructional methodology of creative writing and composition. The first portion of the paper defines RWP as a supplement to language arts programs, presents procedures for organizing an RWP program, and outlines behavioral objectives for a four-week RWP unit. The middle portion then presents a daily syllabus for the four weeks, and a list of writing activities designed for regular writing practice. The final portion of the paper presents methods for formal and informal evaluation of student writing, and RWP samples evaluated using word/T-unit counts. (HTH)

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REGULAR WRITING PRACTICE-

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

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What is Regular Writing Practice?

Regular Writing Practice (RWP) is intensive writing practice designed to supplement Language Arts programs by combining the philosophical and pedagogical bases of Lyman Hunt's USSR program with the instructional methodology of creative writing and composition.

Regular Writing Practice is not a substitute for a well-rounded Language Arts program. It is not a packet of "handouts" to provide students with "seatwork." Rather, RWP is an extension of Language Arts, giving students an opportunity to practice specific skills through the act of writing itself.

Regular Writing Practice is an attitude towards writing that holds that practice, enthusiasm, and critical appraisal of one's writing are key components of writing growth.

Organizing a Regular Writing Practice program:

The following procedures are recommended:

1. A specific, scheduled time each day should be reserved for RWP.
2. RWP should be scheduled either in the morning or at the beginning of the hour when students are rested.
3. RWP should extend from 2 to 15 minutes per day, depending on specific assignments, school schedules, etc.
4. Teachers should write with students whenever possible. However, difficult assignments will require the teacher to be a resource person rather than model writing behavior.
5. Students should write in uniform "notebooks" provided by the teacher. These notebooks may be purchased, made by stapling writing paper between cardboard covers, etc.
6. Daily writing assignments for RWP should be written on the board or dittoed to avoid confusion of the part of the students. Each student should receive a copy of the assignment.
7. The teacher should discuss the assignment briefly with the students, giving them the opportunity to ask questions before

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the RWP period begins.

8. Once the RWP period has begun, students are to remain seated and refrain from talking. On those days when the teacher is a resource person, students may ask for help by raising hands. The teacher should go to the student, rather than having the student come up to the front of the room, etc.

9. Students must write on the assigned topic. Those students who are unable to get started are to continuously copy the assignment's directions until they begin writing on their own or the RWP period ends.

10. Students do not "finish early" in RWP. They may continue to write or copy the directions for the assignment until the end of the RWP period.

11. A time for "sharing writing" should be set aside at the end of each RWP period. Teacher writing should regularly be shared with the students at this time.

Behavioral Objectives for Regular Writing Practice:

Sample behavioral objectives for a 4 week RWP Unit might be as follows:

Students who have successfully participated in the Regular Writing Program will be able to:

1. write a paragraph observing the following guidelines:
   a. select a topic sentence.
   b. write about one idea.
   c. develop sentences in sequence.

2. write an organized explanation of a process.

3. write a short composition supporting his opinion on a given subject.

4. write a short, critical review of a television program, movie, or news photo with which he is familiar.

5. given a simple sentence, recognize the subject and predicate.

6. write sentences using the N-V sentence pattern.

7. write sentences using the N-V-N pattern.

8. write sentences using the N-LV-N pattern.

9. write sentences using the N-LV-ADJ pattern.

10. write sentences using compound subjects, or compound predicates, or both.

11. rewrite two simple sentences as one compound sentence.

12. identify errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in a given personal letter.

13. given a sentence containing a connecting word, punctuate the sentence using the generally accepted rules.

14. use proper capitalization in writing correctly given sentences in which capital letters are not used.

15. given a written selection containing errors in composition and mechanics, proofread the material and make the necessary corrections.

16. demonstrate the ability to improve sentences by adding modifiers.

17. in a given passage, recognize the words or phrases that deal with the five senses.

18. write a brief paragraph using words that appeal to the five senses.

19. write a descriptive paragraph for a character's physical appearance.

20. write a paragraph describing a process or explaining a new term.

21. write a story using word pictures to describe characters, events, and setting.

22. write an original poem in free verse.

23. given a musical selection, list all the mental images that come to mind.

24. given a newspaper headline, write a fictitious story to go along with the headline.

25. write a short letter or passage dealing with a real or fictitious adolescent problem.

26. given the beginning sentences to a story, write the remainder of the story.

An excellent resource for writing behavioral objectives in Language Arts is Behavioral Objectives: A Guide to Individualizing Learning in the Language Arts by John C. Flanagan, Robert F. Mager, and William M. Shanner.

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Week One

Day 1	1. Explain RWP to the class. 2. Administer pre-essay; a writing sample of 200+ words is needed for evaluation. Pen Pal Letter-Write a friendly letter to a "pen pal" or best friend who lives in another state or country telling him or her about your preparations for some holiday. Your letter should be as "newsy" as possible because your friend probably doesn't know exactly how things are done where you live. 30 minutes
Day 2	1. Hand out notebooks to students and mimeoed copy of first writing activity. Describe something you've learned today, either in school or outside of school. 4 minutes
Day 3	Make a list of objects in the room that begin with each letter of the alphabet. 4 minutes
Day 4	Write a "Dear Abby" letter about a real or fictitious adolescent problem. Don't use real names! (A sample of a "Dear Abby" letter should be included with the assignment. 10 minutes
Day 5	Cut or tear a picture from a magazine of something you value. Explain why it's important to you. Staple the picture to your paper. 6 minutes

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Week Two

Day 6	Write a "Receipe for Me." You might include "1 dash muscle, 3 pints sympathy, ½ cup politeness," etc. 5 minutes
Day 7	Write out a real or fictitious problem students have in school. Role play the problem during the "sharing" time at the end of the RWP period. 4 minutes
Day 8	Write an ending to the following story starter: Ralph and Jane were walking home from school through the woods when they saw a wrinkled old man sitting by a campfire. The old man..... 12 minutes
Day 9	Make a "picture frame" from a piece of paper. Lay it on the floor (ground, playground, etc.) and make a list of everything you see in it. 6 minutes
Day	Have a student from another class come in and sit on a chair in front of your class. Describe everything you see about the student. 7 minutes

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Week Three

Day 11	List all the images that come to mind when you hear the recording "Night On Old Bald Mountain", etc. 12 minutes
Day 12	Describe an object in the room without using any colors. Papers may be read aloud during "sharing" time, seeing if students can identify objects. 4 minutes
Day 13	Hand out several unique headlines from the local newspaper. Write a story you think might go along with your headline. 10 minutes Make sure each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with the proper punctuation.
Day 14	Write down three things each that you can see, hear, smell, taste, and feel through your skin. Combine into a class list of senses during the "sharing" time. 5 minutes
Day 15	Hand out the combined list of senses to the students. Pick one of the senses from the list that is most important to you and explain why. 10 minutes

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Week Four

Day 16	Write out directions, step-by-step, for going to your house from school. 8 minutes If practical, these directions may be placed in a box, drawn at random by students, and followed to see what happens.
Day 17	Write a "WANTED" poster for yourself giving your physical description, etc. 5 minutes
Day 18	Cut or tear a picture of some incident from a magazine or newspaper and explain what's going on in the picture. Make sure your paragraph has a beginning, middle, and end. 8 minutes
Day 19	Hand out a short paragraph of student writing (anonymous) and have students revise it according to criteria the class has established in Language Arts. Proofread the following paragraph and correct as many errors as you can find. 8 minutes
Day 20	1. Administer post-essay to class. Historical Event-If you could make some event in history happen again so that you could play a part in it, which one would you choose? Write an essay in which you describe the event, explain why you chose it, and what part you would play in it. 30 minutes

Writing Activities for Regular Writing Practice:

Write an epitaph for yourself. A good way to begin might be to write, "Here lies_____,". 7 minutes

Have a student provide an "Object of the Day" which students describe in a paragraph. 6 minutes

Write a description of the beautifully wrapped package your teacher has placed on the table in front of you. Can you guess what might be inside? 12 minutes

Write a short paragraph on something you dislike. For example, "I hate prunes," or "I hate ticks," etc. 6 minutes

Look at this picture of an old man. Pretend you are in his place. Where are you? What is your name? Who are your friends? What are you doing now? What do you like to do? What did you have for breakfast? 10 minutes

Write a short paragraph explaining "How a Baby Deer Got Its Spots." 6 minutes

Write a short paragraph explaining "How the Snow Goose Got Its Color." 6 minutes

Write a short paragraph explaining "How the Moose Got Its Antlers." 6 minutes

Make up a monster. You might make your monster a swagoo, a girabbit, a duckhund, or a cowl. What does your monster look like? Where does it live? What does it eat? What does it do for fun? 12 minutes

Describe a sunrise as if you were the sun looking down at the humans on earth. 10 minutes

Describe a sunrise from the viewpoint of a person seeing it for the first time. 10 minutes

Write about children on the school ground as if you were a piece of playground equipment. How do you feel towards the boys and girls you see? 8 minutes

Carefully examine the postcard (or Christmas card) you have in front of you and make a list of: (1) the objects you see, and (2) the action that is taking place on the card. 5 minutes

Examine the picture you have been given from a magazine (or newspaper). Make a list of words that describe the action in the picture. Rank the words by numbers from most descriptive (1) to least descriptive (12, etc.). 5 minutes

Write a caption for each of the cartoons you have been given. 4 minutes

Write a descriptive word to fill the empty blanks in the story. Copy the story in your notebook. 8 minutes

In the middle of the _____, _____ night Jimmy heard a _____ sound. It frightened him so much that he ran into his brother's _____ room to tell him about it. While they were talking, they both heard something that sounded like a _____, _____ witch cackling to someone in the _____, _____ garage. Together they tiptoed down the _____ stairs to investigate. As Jimmy placed his _____ hand on the _____ knob of the _____ door, a _____ scream tortured the boy's ears. Shaking and stumbling into the _____ garage, the _____boys were startled to see a pair of _____eyes staring at them. Quickly switching on the _____ lights, the boys saw a _____, _____ cat standing on top of the _____ car. His back was humped and his _____ tail pointed upwards. When Jimmy and his brother realized it was only a _____ cat, they laughed and laughed.

Write several headlines that might appear in a newspaper 25 years from now. What does each of the headlines tell us about what will happen in the future? 6 minutes

Write 5 or 6 phrases (groups of words) that answer one of the following questions: What is a raindrop? What is a friend? What is a report card? What is a cloud? What is a mother? What is a dog? For example:

What is summer?
hot, scorching days
running over sandy beaches
no school
fun
trips

5 minutes

Write a description of one of the following objects in motion:
-an agile squirrel jumping from one tree branch to another.
-a bird building a nest.
-a snowball whizzing through the air. 8 minutes

Write one good, complete sentence that describes what you saw as you looked out the window. Don't begin your sentence with "I saw," or "I see." 2 minutes

Complete the following sentences using the best descriptive words and phrases you can think of:
-He had just started to doze when suddenly.....
-Angrily he slammed down the phone when.....
-The huge boulder rumbled nearer and nearer as.....
-As the snake slithered closer..... 4 minutes

Write a paragraph about your yard at home. Make sure you use as many descriptive words as possible. 10 minutes

Make a list of 10 of your favorite sounds. For example, Night Sounds: owl hooting, crickets chirping, frogs croaking; Morning Sounds: alarm clock buzzing, birds chirping, radio blaring, kids yelling. 5 minutes

Write a paragraph using the list of sounds you made yesterday. 12 minutes

Imagine that you are a spider on the way to the moon in a rocket. Are you able to spin a web? How do you feel? What do you see? Write a story about your adventure. 15 minutes

Describe something you saw on your way to school this morning. 6 minutes

Read this story. Think of a logical solution to Debbie's problem and write your ideas in your notebook.

> Returning home from school one day in March, Debbie found her parents discussing the three week spring vacation they would soon be enjoying. Debbie's Collie could not go along because they would be visiting her grandmother in Florida who was alergic to dogs. They couldn't leave the dog in the kennel because he had gotten so lonesome the last time that he didn't eat for three days. What would you do to solve Debbie's problem? 10 minutes

Finish the following science fiction story:

> It was a hot, dull summer day with nothing to do. Jeff lounged at the base of the giant maple tree, snapping twigs and trying yo think of something to do. Suddenly he heard a strange sound in the branches high above him. He was curious to find out what had made the alien noise, so he started to climb up, up, up. As he came in sight of the upper branches, he had no idea of the unusual adventure that awaited him. 15 minutes

What do you think would happen if a bear came to your school? Write a story using the following topic sentence:

"One day a bear came to our school." 10 minutes

Suppose that an astronaut finds a cave on the moon that leads to a huge cavern. Describe what he discovers and what happens to him. 12 minutes

Suppose that a spaceship from another planet has landed on the moon. Two American astronauts see it. What happens? 10 minutes

Suppose scientists develop a colony on the moon. You are among the first people to live there with your family. Describe the way you live and your adventures there. 12 minutes

Suppose you are one of the astronauts chosento visit the closest star in our galaxy. Describe your observations on the way there and explain what happens when you finally arrive years later. 15 minutes

If you and your friends became lost in the snow, what would you do in order to survive? 10 minutes

You are a baby bird just hatched from an egg. Your mother feeds you. You grow each day. It is time for you to leave the nest. Write a story telling what happens to you. 15 minutes

Imagine you are a postage stamp. Write a story describing where you started, where you traveled, and your final destination. 12 minutes

Pretend you are a bottle of cola. Describe in your story all the places you visit and people you see. What finally happens to you? 12 minutes

Write an adventure about something that happened to one of the objects in the room after that object came to life during the night. 10 minutes

What does your sandwich say to the apple inside your lunch box? 5 minutes

What do your shoes talk about at night after you've gone to bed? 5 minutes

What are the oranges saying to the apples as they sit in the refrigerator ready to be eaten? 5 minutes

What do your two pet gerbils talk about at night when everyone is asleep? 5 minutes

What might the tall redwood tree say to the young pine tree? 5 minutes

How do you think the angel feels about being placed on top of the Christmas tree? What does she see? Would she rather be someplace else? Does she have any fears? What are some interesting daily happenings she might observe? 12 minutes

Imagine how you looked as a baby. Write a paragraph describing what you looked like, thought about, and what you were doing. 12 minutes

Imagine how you will look when you get your first job. Write a paragraph describing what you will look like and the kind of work you are doing. 12 minutes

Write a paragraph about some things that you can do to help matters run more smoothly at home. 8 minutes

Many times we let our imaginations magnify our fear. Write about something that frightens you and how you think you might overcome that fear. 10 minutes

You are climbing a hill. You must get to the top of it! Time is running out. The hill is so hard to climb. The hill itself is your enemy-it seems to fight you every inch of the way. Do you make it to the top? Do you slip? What helps or prevents you in your climb? What is so important about reaching the top? 12 minutes

"It" is coming closer and closer. It terrifies you. You've never seen anything like it. You can't believe this is happening to you! What is it? What does it look like? What is it going to do to you? 10 minutes

You did it! You committed the crime! Now write your confession (using "I"). Why did you do it? 12 minutes

Write a letter to an inanimate object (a window, a car. a stone, etc.). What are the human qualities that your object has? 12 minutes

Close your eyes. What do you see on the inside of your eyelids? Colors? Shapes? Strange creatures? Make a list of the things you see. 5 minutes

List everything you see within five feet of you. Notice details! 4 minutes

Write a description of an object in the room without naming it. See if you can write your description so that other students won't be able to guess what the object is. 8 minutes

Make a list of the different kinds of movements you could use to get from this room into the next room. 4 minutes

Close your eyes and imagine you are going on a journey--to somewhere you want to go, or hate to go. How do you want to go? Fly? Sail? Walk? What preparations will you have to make? What is the most important thing you can take with you? 15 minutes

Children may someday go to school all year long. Do you think this is a good idea? Why, or why not? 10 minutes

Imagine that you were captured by a group of Martians when you visited the planet Mars. They tell you that you will be allowed to return to Earth only if you become either a Martian dog or a Martian cat for one month. Martian dogs and cats are not at all like dogs and cats on Earth. Write down what you would do and why. 12 minutes

Evaluating Regular Writing Practice:

Informal Evaluation-

1. A series of informal interviews and/or conferences should take place during the course of the RWP unit to determine student attitudes towards writing, the unit itself, the writing activities, etc.

2. Student RWP notebooks may be collected at the end of each week or every other week for evaluation by the teacher. However, under no circumstances should the student's writing be graded. Instead, it is recommended that each student's writing progress be subjectively noted on an index card using primary trait evaluation (looking for one particular writing characteristic).

Formal Evaluation-

1. The T-Unit (independent clause) provides a reasonably accurate means of measuring student growth in syntactic maturity.
2. Words/T-Unit (words per independent clause) should be totaled on the pre- and post-essays for each student and compared to determine growth in syntactic maturity.
3. Roy O'Donnell lists 9.34 as a typical Words/T-Unit for a fifth grader. Although the above average possesses some reliability, it is difficult to generalize from one population to the next. Therefore, Words/T-Unit statistics should always be qualified according to population. For example, a student who scores 8.5 on the pre-essay and 9.3 on the post-essay has made excellent writing progress regardless of whether or not the student is above or below the class mean.

RWP Samples evaluated using Words/T-Unit:

(I would become a Martian dog) (I would run around biting people) (I would also fly to the saucers and tear them up)

(The next week I would play dead) (People would gather around me) so (I would bite them) Then (I would shoot rays out of my eyes at everyone) But (all this would be a secret) Then (no one would harm me)

(The third week I would relax) play with other dogs. (We would play kill the cats, eat the people, and tear up saucers) Then (I would go house to house eating good food like steak, Martian supreme, and drink Tang by the gallons) Then go rest under grape trees, and drink Tang.

(The last week I would travel all over Mars picking up things for the space program) (I picked up grape trees, rocks, a dog for me, a saucer, and other things like money and jewels)

Then (before I'm changed back I would bite the king and bring back his body) Then (after I'm changed back, I'll steal a baby Martian and keep him) Then (I would name him Trickets) A name for a dog. So (that's why I would be a dog)

19 T-Units; 182 words in T-Units; 182/19= 9.58 Words/T-Unit

I would become a Martian cat because I like cats. But I soon found out that their cats are so different I collapsed. When I woke up I was laying in a pile of manure. I knew that I was a cat but why was I asleep in the manure. I found out that's where cats sleep. I also found out that they eat manure. I was born with white spots on me and I was very small. When I went outside to play I found they don't play, they work on the rock pile from morning to noon and from there on they wash dishes. I found it a very hard life.

10 T-Units; 114 words in T-Units; 114/10 = 11.4 Words/T-Unit

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